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ABSTRACT

Providing the chief example of a successful adult education movement in the United States, the Cooperative Extension Service has demonstrated the capacity to adjust its programs to meet changing rural and urban needs. The roughly 3000 local offices provide people with ready access to a staff who are backed up by the land-grant university based specialists, but who reside in the area they serve. As a part of the land-grant system, it conducts continuing education programs of many types, while as a joint venture with the U. S. Department of Agriculture it places emphasis on improving the productivity and quality of life in rural areas. Additional emphasis is given to environmental quality, consumer information, energy conservation and management, improving the productivity and viability of agriculture and the wise use of natural resources. The future presents challenges to the system--determining program priorities, serving the many types of people, and meeting the changing urgency of different problems. (MW)

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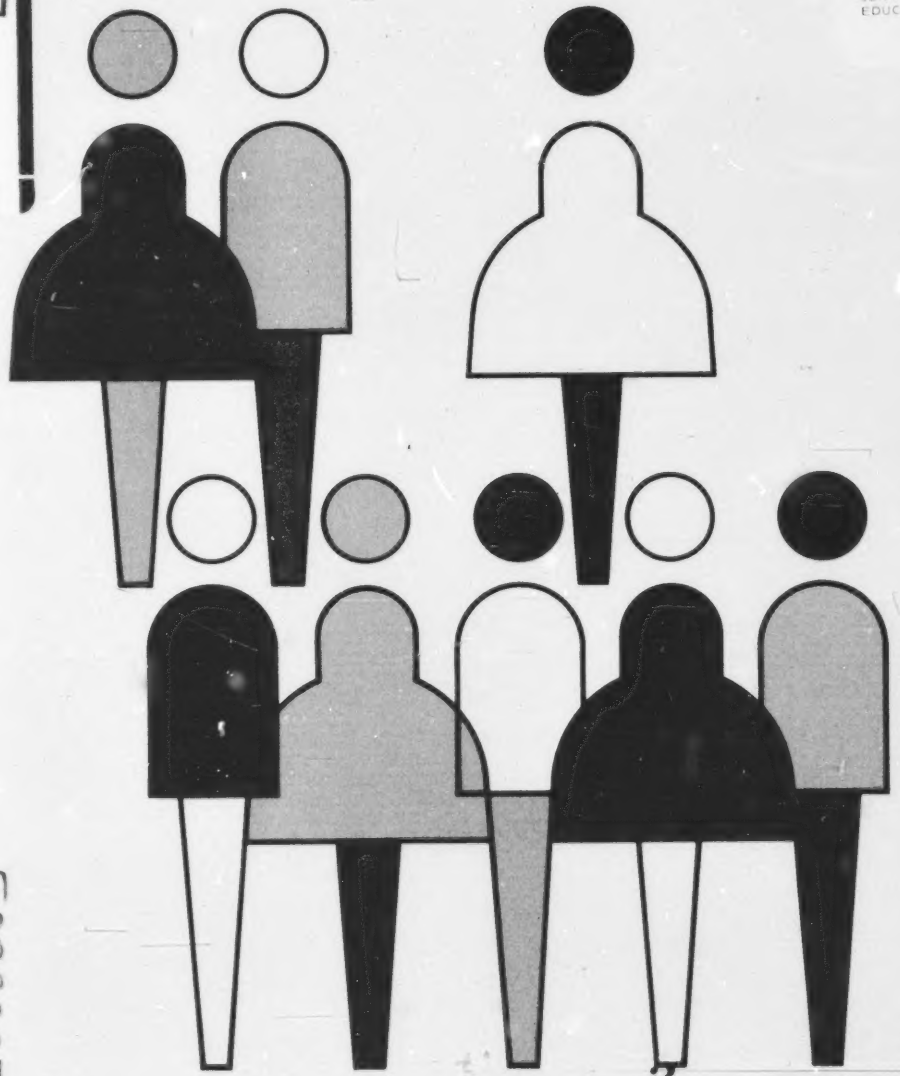

The Cooperative Extension Service

. . . A NATIONWIDE KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM FOR TODAY'S PROBLEMS . . .

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INTRODUCTION

In 1914, our nation created a new and unique system of education designed to take knowledge directly to the people of rural America. This system was the Cooperative Extension Service. It was based on the belief that human progress could be enhanced if the products of research could be translated to lay language and made available to individuals for a higher quality of decision making. The success of this system in developing the world's most productive agriculture has been recognized throughout the world.

Through the years, Cooperative Extension also proved its ability to improve the quality of life of those it reached. It encouraged and developed youth, it improved rural homes and communities, and it widened its range to urban areas as new problems confronted the nation.

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Key to the success of Extension has been its unique structure as a partnership of federal, state, and county governments with strong guidance in its priorities from those it serves. Local volunteers extend its range and influence. The system has survived and grown because of its objectivity and its ability to adapt short range priorities to the longer range needs of the public. Its strength lies in its ability to use research based facts in logical relationship to national or state goals without being dominated by any of the levels of government which support it. Although influenced by state and national goals, Extension balances them against local needs and priorities.

Today, the Cooperative Extension Service, with more than 3,000 offices throughout the nation, remains the only system with a statewide organization, national affiliation, and local support which is dedicated to the transfer and use of knowledge to solve problems. The system has great flexibility. The framework is in place for problem-solving education to be applied in a wide range of emerging new national, state, and local problems. This publication is written to give the decision makers of today and tomorrow a glimpse of what the Cooperative Extension Service is and what its potential can be.

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The Cooperative Extension Service is the largest, most successful informal educational organization in the world. It is a nationwide system funded and guided by a partnership of federal, state, and local governments that delivers information to help people help themselves through the land-grant university system.

There's a Cooperative Extension Service in each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, and Guam. In 16 states, there are additional institutions which are participating in Extension programs and which were created by the second Morrill Act of 1890. Extension programs are now conducted in 3,150 counties and many cities.

Extension carries out programs in the broad categories of: agriculture, natural resources and environment; home economics; 4-H and other youth; and community resource development. Extension staff members live and work among the people they serve to help stimulate and educate Americans to plan ahead and cope with their problems.

Some characteristics of the Cooperative Extension system are:

- The federal, state and local governments cooperatively share in its financial support and program direction.
- It is administered by the land-grant university as designated by the state legislature through an Extension director.
- Extension programs are nonpolitical, objective, and based on factual information.
- It provides practical, problem-oriented education for people of all ages. It is designed to take the knowledge of the university to those persons who do not or cannot participate in the formal classroom instruction of the university.
- It utilizes research from university, government, and other sources to help people make their own decisions.
- More than a million volunteers help multiply the impact of the Extension professional staff.
- It dispenses no funds to the public.

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- It is not a regulatory agency, but it does inform people of regulations and of their options in meeting them.
- Local programs are developed and carried out in full recognition of national problems and goals.
- The Extension staff educates people through personal contacts, meetings, demonstrations, and the mass media.
- Extension has the built-in flexibility to adjust its programs and subject matter to meet new needs. Activities shift from year to year as citizen groups and Extension workers close to the problems advise changes.

But the citizens themselves cast the final vote by electing to take part in the Extension programs that serve them best.

The Extension Service has working arrangements with many agencies which have resources needed by people served by Extension. This represents a broad potential for greater service. Programs involving the transfer of technology, environmental quality, personal safety, and information relating to consumer health and protection are logical ones for such cooperative activities. Cooperative Extension is already serving the clientele and has a considerable amount of personnel and facilities already in place that are needed. With added funding Extension can be responsive to the needs of other agencies in government which require an educational delivery system.

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Nationwide, the Extension Service has about 200 staff members in Washington, D.C. and approximately 23,000 in the 50 states, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, and Guam which include professional, paraprofessional, and support staff. In addition to administrators and supervisors, they include:

SPECIALISTS

An Extension Specialist is the key interpretative link between research and people needing new technology and information. The Specialist is constantly evaluating new research and preparing data for practical application on the farm and in the home.

The Extension Specialist usually has advanced degrees and training in a selected discipline and works closely in programs with county and area Extension staffs.

AGENTS

Spearheading the work of the Cooperative Extension Service are the County Extension Agents. They live among the people — farmers, agricultural industries, homemakers, youth, and community leaders. Most of their assistance is provided through meetings, demonstrations, workshops, shortcourses, publications, mass media, and follow-up consultation.

Extension staff combines professional, paraprofessional, and support resources to achieve goals.

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EFNEP aide demonstrates recipe in an effort to teach better nutrition skills.

More than 6,200 man-years are devoted by agricultural agents to the problems of agriculture. More than 3,400 man-years of Extension home economists' effort are devoted to helping individuals and families find better ways of managing home and family living problems.

Agricultural agents and home economists work with 4-H leaders on projects and other youth activities. Some counties, with large numbers in 4-H, employ special agents to work with youth.

About 1,200 "area" agents with advanced training also are employed to meet specialized needs in agriculture, home economics, and rural communities.

Backstopping the agents are about 5,000 regional, state, and national specialists and supervisors giving leadership and providing instructional resources. Extension agents working on the problems of people frequently serve as catalysts to pool the sources of information available from several governmental agencies and educational organizations in the area.

AIDES

A recent addition to the Extension team is the "program aide." Nearly 6,800 of them are employed, mostly in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, to help supplement the educational services of county staff.

Nutrition program aides are homemakers who show other low-income homemakers how to feed their families nutritious meals at minimum cost. Aides are carefully selected from the target audience and hence understand the problems they are working on. They help homemakers understand nutrition, family budgets, and refer them to agencies for other special needs.

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Nutrition program aides are assigned to both rural and urban areas and represent many backgrounds and ethnic groups.

Agricultural program aides are being employed in some states to work directly with small farmers to help them improve income through improved production and marketing practices.

Youth programs are being expanded, particularly in urban areas through the use of Summer Youth Aides.

Program aides search out disadvantaged people who need the kind of educational help Extension can give, but who do not know such help is available, or may hesitate to ask for it. Another important function of aides is to motivate people to properly utilize available assistance programs.

VOLUNTEERS

More than a million Americans volunteer their time and skills to help with Extension work.

About 500,000 adults serve as advisers and leaders for 4-H groups and help with individual projects. Another 100,000 are junior leaders — older 4-H'ers who want to be active and work with other youth.

Many thousand volunteer women work closely with Extension home economists to arrange and conduct educational programs for local homemakers.

Many farmers also volunteer their services for program development and make their farms available for tours and demonstrations to help their neighbors learn about new crops, equipment, or practices in farming.

Volunteers serve on many Extension committees. These include county, state, and national advisory, commodity, and technical committees. County Extension councils of volunteers help identify problems needing educational input and advise Extension on program development.

Thousands of business and community leaders also give their time, money, and guidance to help promote and encourage 4-H, community, and other Extension efforts.

These volunteers who function as part of the Extension system make public funds invested in Extension go further in serving people.

A volunteer assists youth in clothing project.

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"About face!"

That's the command the hungry world with increased buying power has given American farmers.

The nation has shifted from worrying about paying farmers to store surplus products to concern about having an ample supply of them. All of a sudden "agriculture plus energy equals food."

American agriculture is a bright spot in U.S. international trade with total U.S. farm exports of over $17 billion in 1973 — a favorable Balance of Payments.

County Extension agent offers agricultural advice to member of community.

An agent provides assistance through a field crop demonstration.

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Research and Extension combine to improve the quality of our food.

Today's farmers are using the Extension Service to develop and use (1) computer programs for a least-cost ration for livestock, or to match the size of machines needed for a certain acreage; (2) tax management and estate planning programs; (3) a "systems agriculture" program for hogs, beef, or sheep, for example, where a farmer needs detailed technology for one enterprise; and other specific management problems with these objectives for all farmers:

Strengthen the independent family production unit and the wise use of natural resources.

Increase net income for producers at the market place.

Improve marketing systems for agricultural products.

Help producers adjust to new environmental standards.

Improve energy conservation and management on the farm and in the home.

Strengthen pest management systems, including weeds, diseases, and insects.

Improve public understanding of agriculture and the need for rational policy in relation to agricultural resources and food and fiber.

All of this brings into sharp focus the new challenge to U.S. farmers facing a new market oriented structure and an all-time high cost of production, and to the Extension Service to help them find quick and accurate answers for management decisions.

Whether agriculture is dealing with problems of high production or scarcity, Cooperative Extension shifts with the need to bring relevant knowledge to bear in a decision making framework. This represents a continuing priority program.

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Extension agent concerns range from livestock nutrition to waste disposal.

Stress farm safety and safety with agricultural chemicals.

Help farmers improve management of privately owned forest land.

Help low-income producers broaden their resource base.

Conduct continuing education programs for a wide variety of professional agriculturists and representatives of business and industry.

Provide consumers with dependable flow of high quality agricultural products.

U.S. farmers are the world's most efficient producers with output per man-hour today 3.1 times that of 20 years ago. Industrial output has increased 1.7 times in that period. A significant part of the agricultural efficiency can be traced to the land-grant university-USDA research and Extension team.

This is true because the main tool of Extension is to transfer research findings and technological information from the lab and field plots of the university to the farm and rural home through the State Specialist and the County Extension Agent.

Extension Service programs to improve performance of production and marketing systems reach every commodity.

The Extension Service also shares public concern for protecting and improving our environment. Extension is showing new ways to handle animal wastes and to meet state and federal regulations for feedlot operations. Extension Services are aiding farmers by transferring technology designed to solve environmental problems as they adjust to new environmental standards. Such programs are enhanced through cooperation with agencies charged with environmental responsibilities.

Extension Specialists and County Agents have introduced new systems of tillage and "double cropping" to help farmers conserve energy, reduce erosion and pollution, save soil nutrients, lower production costs, and increase farm income.

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Forest Management: In some regions absentee owners control as much as 90% of the forest resources, while farmers on a national basis own approximately 40% of the timber land. Extension is helping both small and large farmers extend present timber supplies with improved management.

Crop Production: Extension helps farmers take advantage of new varieties, improve soil and pest management techniques, and adopt new methods of production, harvest, storage, and marketing.

Poultry, Livestock, and Dairy Production: The research technology relayed to farmers and commodity associations by the Extension staff has helped increase productivity to meet escalating consumer demands. (U.S. beef consumption has nearly doubled in 20 years, for instance, totaling 116 pounds per person in 1972.)

Horticulture: Extension work touches nearly every citizen in some way. Farm producers use Extension recommendations on growing and marketing vegetables and fruits. Producers of nursery stock, flowers, and sod use Extension recommendations for related interests in flowers, shrubs, ornamentals, and turf. Agents in urban counties spend much time on ornamental horticulture with home owners and others in the community. Some interesting developments in the use of volunteers and student interns to assist in home horticulture problems are occurring.

On-the-ground tour for forest landowners.

Extension entomologists train cotton insect scouts.

The members of the family are the most important people in the world! That's why Extension has out-of-school educational programs for families which are being used by more than 10 million people each year to improve the quality of their home and family life. Inflation, rapid social and economic changes, and the shifting roles of family members are creating problems which home economists are helping people to solve.

The objectives and capabilities of Extension home economics are related directly to helping people through work with the family in the following areas of national concern:

Food and nutrition
Family housing
Family resource management and consumer education
Individual and family relationships
Textiles and clothing
Health and safety
Community resource development

More than 3,400 home economists and 6,800 program aides plus thousands of volunteers are teaching people the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to adapt to today's complex world.

Reaching families of all incomes, Extension home economists take information to people through mass media, meetings, self-study courses, demonstrations, organized groups, newsletters, publications, and other methods.

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Getting the most food for the dollar, understanding rising prices, producing and preserving food at home, following food safety practices, and planning nutritious meals are important matters for today's consumers. One-third of all Extension home economists' time is devoted to this teaching. Priority is given to young consumers and low-income families.

In the five years since the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) began, 917,000 low-income families have learned to improve their diets through the one-to-one teaching of program aides. Most of the aides come from the communities in which they work and thus understand local problems.

Home economist makes a lesson plan for educational program in textiles and clothing.

State home economics specialist teaches on TV.

Since 80 percent of personal income after taxes is spent on consumer goods and services, Extension's programs in family economics, management, and consumer education are designed to help people in buying, using, maintaining, and disposing of goods and services. Focus has especially been on the current issues of rising food costs, and energy management around the home with practical information to the press and the public.

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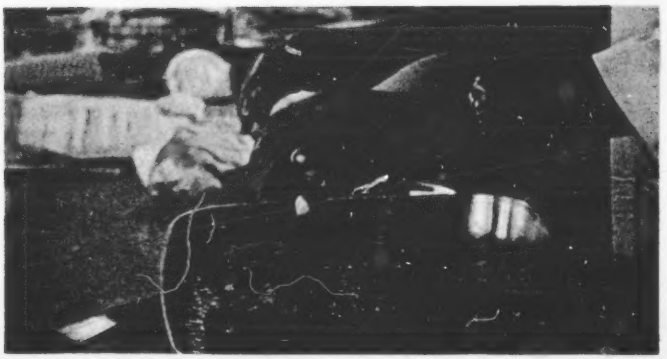
Extension human development starts with the very young.



Human nutrition — an important area of Extension education.

Extension home economists help people create community awareness of available and needed health services. They also provide information to aid in preventing illness and accidents.

About 30 percent of family income is spent on housing, including furnishings and equipment. Extension helps people analyze their housing needs, resources, and alternatives.

Rural towns, with 60 percent of the nation's substandard housing, and rapidly growing urban areas face stress in providing community services and meeting human needs. Extension helps develop the leadership needs for community improvement programs, and encourages residents to study local needs and make group decisions.

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In 1980 it is estimated that one-half of the U.S. population will be 15-34 years old. At a critical time of their lives, young people frequently have limited resources in relation to their needs. Many lack the experience and skills needed for home and family living. Extension educators conduct practical problem-oriented programs to help such young people cope with their situation.

Extension also conducts programs aimed at assisting individuals and families to understand themselves and tc strengthen the family unit.

Extension is concerned with helping people achieve a better way of life. Extension helps by working with people on community problems calling for group considerations and decisions.

Community development, in its broadest sense, is not new to Extension. Most Extension workers spend part of their time at it; many work full time. Most Extension development work is in rural areas and small cities.

Extension plays a role in many facets of community life. Some of these are:

Community leadership and organization. Getting people organized to deal with community problems and discuss solutions is a high priority effort. Progress in community improvement can frequently be traced back to the aggressiveness of local leadership. This in turn rests on the knowledge people have about the situation and how to lead effectively. This a major component of Extension programs in this field.

Comprehensive planning and land use. Extension helps local citizens gather facts, set goals, and develop plans for their communities. Land use is becoming an increasingly important local and national problem, and policy-oriented Extension programs are being carried out to outline alternatives and the consequences of various courses of action.

Community leaders plan development . . .

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. . . to bring new life to small communities.

Community facilities and services. Many communities are faced with problems such as solid waste disposal, shortage of health services, and water and sewer service. Extension taps the resources of the state land-grant university and other appropriate agencies in order to assist communities faced with problems of housing, recreation, and utilities.

Jobs. Many rural communities, faced with a shrinking farm labor force and out-migration, would like more jobs for their people. Rural America is trying to attract industry, but skilled labor is necessary to run it. Through special programs like Concerted Services in Training and Education (CSTE), Hitchhike, and others, Extension helps train workers for tomorrow's jobs.

Rural development involves main street, services, recreation facilities, economic vitality, and planning.

Recreation. Creative use of leisure time is becoming a basic value. Extension works with communities as they decide what kind of recreation and tourism facilities they can offer residents and tourists. It is also involved in land-use planning, zoning, and providing economic data when studies are conducted.

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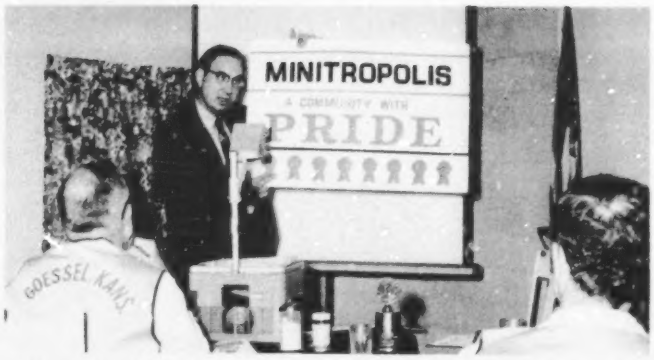
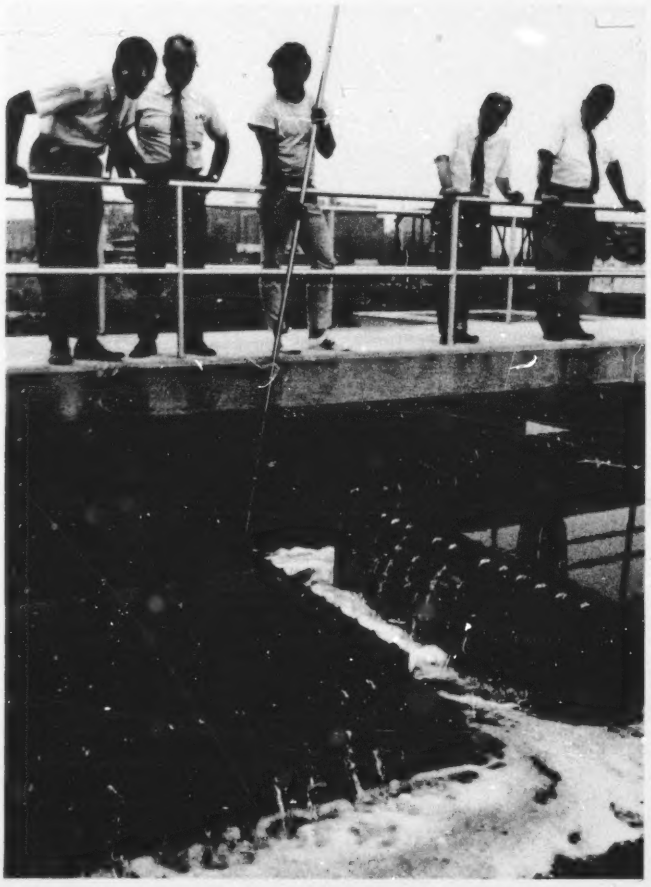


Extension helps people develop communities that are better places to live, work, and enjoy life.

Planning recreational facilities — a basic part of community improvement.



Establishing modern community facilities helps alleviate critical problems.

The subject matter and expertise of a wide variety of other Extension projects must be brought to bear as community leaders move through the community development process.

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-H'ers become responsible adults through citizenship training.

The future of the nation is tied up with the development of its youth. The Extension Service has a special youth program to help. About 5½ million young people from all races, incomes, and backgrounds are developing life skills through the 4-H coeducational youth program.

These 4-H'ers come from everywhere in the nation — farms, cities, towns — to experience this informal out-of-school learning. They learn through clubs, instructional 4-H television series, day camps, and special interest courses.

Objectives of this youth program which has been copied the world over include:

Develop leadership talents and abilities.

Learn skills and attitudes that will lead to a satisfying life.

Develop traits of healthful living, purposeful recreation, and intelligent use of leisure time.

Develop the attitudes, abilities, and understanding needed to work cooperatively with others.

Develop responsible citizenship.

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Bicycle safety — a popular 4-H youth project.

4-H camp — developing life skills through coeducational youth programs.

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Plant science project — learning to use science and technology for a better environment.

More than half a million adult and teen volunteer leaders, 1,000 Extension aides, and 5,200 professionals guide 4-H members in projects that fit their needs as well as the areas where they live. These young people not only learn "how to" subject matter, but also develop skills in initiating inquiries relating to others, and relating to change. Perhaps the most important result of participation is the development of personal leadership and responsible citizenship.

Foods and nutrition — a project designed to teach health-enhancement skills and consumer awareness.

Youth enrolled in 4-H projects learn how to use science and technology, maintain mental and physical health, communicate with others, and choose careers. They discover worthwhile ways to use time, talents, and money. Some of the most popular project areas are junior leadership, citizenship, animal science, clothing, food and nutrition, recreation and crafts, health and safety, and plant science.

The 4-H program, with its many facets, may have a different meaning for each person it touches. To a 9-year-old, 4-H is fun and friends; to another member it may be learning to cook, sew, or raise plants or animals; to some it's being able to talk to an adult leader and have him listen.

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Photography project — another popular 4-H project.

Millions of young people in most of the states are enrolled in special educational television programs on nutrition, photography, emergency preparedness, and many other 4-H subjects.

Another fast-growing 4-H interest is Rural Community Development. Some communities have set up youth advisory boards and in others, youth serve on community development boards.

Farm-city exchange day — one aspect of a multifaceted program.

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"CHIEF EXAMPLE OF SUCCESSFUL ADULT EDUCATION"

The Cooperative Extension Service has demonstrated the capacity to adjust its programs as the solving of rural areas change, and to contribute to selected urban problems as well. The roughly 3,000 local offices provide people with ready access to a staff who are backed up by the land-grant university-based specialists, but who reside in the area they serve. As a part of the land-grant system, it conducts continuing education programs of many types, while as a joint venture with the U.S. Department of Agriculture it places emphasis on improving the productivity and quality of life in rural areas.

A report by the Carnegie Corporation states that the Cooperative Extension Service provides the chief example of a successful adult educational movement in the United States and represents, so far, the only success of the federal government in providing continuing support in higher education.

The ability of the Extension Service to function as an objective nonpolitical delivery system in connection with the work of other government agencies is a growing dimension. Extension programs have become more useful to more people as additional emphasis is given to environmental quality, consumer information, energy conservation and management, improving the productivity and viability of agriculture, and the wise use of natural resources. With added funds the system can make such contributions at a relatively low cost.

One of the greatest challenges facing the system in the future involves the determination of the priorities to which the program will be directed. This decision is complicated by the diversity of the types of people served, their occupations, their motivations, their scholastic attainments, their backgrounds, and their varied economic resources. It is also complicated by the changing urgency of different problems. Because of the situation faced by the different states and counties within the states, program emphasis will vary.

In making these decisions on priority, reliance will continue to be placed upon guidance from those who seek and need information, as a voluntary educational program can only succeed when it is in consonance with such needs.

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County office locations may be obtained from each State Extension Office.

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By law and purpose, the Colorado State University Cooperative Extension Service is dedicated to serve all people on an equal and nondiscriminatory basis.

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